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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1951 SEP PM 5 25

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

September 24, 1951

DW
J.F
RV
RA

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT

Item 4. Middle East Command.

The President has read the memorandum on the Middle East Command and it seems entirely appropriate to him. He is willing that we take whatever action we think necessary to carry out the plan

DA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY WWOLF DATE 6/1/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
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Copies to:

Mr. McGhee (Action)
Mr. Cabot
Mr. Perkins
Mr. Nitze
Mr. Bohlen

DECLASSIFICATION DATE 6/28/78
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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OFFICE OF DIRECTOR
S/P

September 17, 1951

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND ACTING SECRETARY WEBB, SEPTEMBER 7

Item 2. Middle East Command Structure

The President kept the memorandum signed by the Secretary. He said he would read it carefully and inform us of his decision.

James E. Webb

P.S. What did Webb leave with the President? JF

attached

cc: S/ISA - Mr. Cabot
NEA - Mr. Berry
S/P - Mr. Nitze

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Importance of Egypt to the Middle East Command Structure

You are aware that informal politico-military talks were held September 5 - 7 with representatives of the British Government in Washington with a view to aligning US - UK policies towards Egypt in preparation for my talks with Messrs. Morrison and Bevin, and as a foundation for the establishment of a Supreme Allied Commander Middle East, in whose headquarters American, French, and, it is hoped, Turkish and Egyptian officers will participate. A prerequisite to an approach to Egypt on this question is an invitation to Turkey to join NATO. If all goes well, an approach to Egypt by the US, UK, France (and, we hope, Turkey) will take place during the last week in September.

In order to assure the continued availability to the West of the vital British base in the Suez Canal area and, at the same time, to meet the strongly-voiced demands of Egyptian nationalists for "evacuation" and "unity of the Nile Valley" (the Sudan Problem), the UK, in conjunction with the US and France, will propose to Egypt that the Suez base be transferred from UK auspices to the multilateral auspices of a Supreme Allied Commander, Middle East (SACME). To make the proposed new arrangement acceptable to the Egyptian Government will require that a number of concessions and incentives be given Egypt. While these will come primarily from the UK, the US share of the effort will be arms procurement and training assistance, grant aid and very limited economic aid, all under MDAP. The Defense Department considers that there is no adequate substitute for the Egyptian base; consequently, provided Egypt is willing to cooperate with SACME, it will be necessary to give Egypt preferred treatment in arms and other ways at the price of securing our objectives. If Egypt does not elect to cooperate with SACME, we will go through with the establishment of the Middle East Allied Command (with headquarters elsewhere than in Egypt) but at the same time we will wish to withhold favors from Egypt.

The singling out of Egypt for preferred treatment in exchange for its cooperation is likely to cause certain other Arab States to seek

cooperation

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TO: S - The Secretary

September 12, 1951

VIA: U - Mr. Matthews
S/S

FROM: NEA

SUBJECT: Egyptian Participation in the Middle East Command Structure

The attached memorandum to the President (Tab A) sets forth present developments in connection with the Middle East Command structure, and explains the circumstances surrounding proposed Egyptian participation in the Command structure as a founder member, and why it is necessary that Israel should not at thr outset play a prominent role in the Middle East Command.

We feel that these points should be discussed with the President as soon as possible in order that he will be aware of some of the problems which we will have to face in connection with the Command structure and the position of Israel in regard to it.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that: (1) you sign the attached memorandum; and (2) you seek the President's approval for the policy set forth therein.

Concurrences:

Attachment: S/P EUR

Tab A

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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S/P

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comparable treatment. Saudi Arabia is already receiving considerable assistance from us. Within the limited scope of the MSP, we would like to meet these demands to the extent possible but with the proviso that recipient states cooperate with SACME.

Israel presents a special problem in connection with SACME. The mission of SACME is to defend the Middle East as a whole, and thus the defense of Israel is clearly one of its responsibilities. There is little doubt that Israel will be prepared to cooperate fully with SACME. On the other hand, the Arab refugees and the creation of Israel has in large measure brought into being the nationalist tendencies in the Arab States which, it is hoped the establishment of SACME will overcome. Whether Egypt and the other Arab States will cooperate with SACME is still in grave doubt. One of the ways to influence the Arab States against SACME is too public association of Israel with the Allied Command at this formative stage. In consequence, the US, UK, France (and possibly Turkey) may find it desirable to remind Israel that its security vis-a-vis the Arab States is still protected by the Tripartite Declaration of May 25, 1950, and to ask Israel not to insist upon a prominent role in the new Allied Command until it is firmly established with the Arabs.

This will require considerable forbearance on the part of Israel, particularly when material US and Allied aid is given Egypt as a part of the buildup of Egypt to play a major role in the defense of the Middle East. On the other hand, Prime Minister Ben Gurion and the other important Israelis have always asserted that Egypt is the key to peace between the Arab States and Israel, i.e., if Egypt will sign a peace treaty, the other Arab States will do likewise. One of the important objectives behind the establishment of the Allied Command structure is that it will give Egypt and the other Arab States something more productive to think about than their feud with Israel and thus pave the way for an eventual peace settlement.

It is provided that SACME through his liaison organization will work closely but quietly with Israel from the establishment of his Command. Israel will not, however, be offered the same status in the Command that Turkey and Egypt will enjoy if they accept the proposals which the UK, US and France will make to them.

The foregoing is set forth in the expectation that you may be approached by people who will state that Egypt, which still claims to be at war with Israel, is receiving treatment in the new Command structure preferential to that accorded Israel. The answer is that the new Command, with Egypt in full and equal partnership with the US, UK, France and Turkey does not alter Israel's security position; provision has been made for Israel's participation in the work of the Command, the existence

of

of which efforts Israel increased hope for an eventual peace settlement with Egypt and the other Arab States.

It is recommended that you approve the policy set forth above.

NEA:NE:GLJones:chd 9/12/51

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Youssef concluded the conversation by telling us that the King had refused to agree to the adjournment of Parliament until the "Fortunes" bill was passed. He said the Parliament was going to pass the bill. He also said that the King had signed the law abrogating the 1936 Treaty and would sign the law declaring him King of the Sudan, but that he would not sign the others at the present time. He mentioned that the King was anxious to maintain order and that he had already spoken sternly to the Minister of the Interior about the disturbances in the Canal Zone.

John H. Ferguson